

## 4 FOOD &amp; WINE



## MAX ALLEN

## Vindication of the long-distance vitner

THIRTEEN years. That's how long it's taken for Blue Poles Vineyard owner Mark Gifford to feel confident he was right to plant the grapes he did where he did. "For the first time since we started this, I'm hopeful we can make it work," says Gifford as we taste his newest wines. Once again I'm reminded what a long-term proposition the wine game is. And how it helps to have a single-minded vision.

In 2001, Gifford and fellow wine-loving geologist Tim Markwell and their families bought some land in the east of Western Australia's Margaret River region. Gifford knew the region and its soils well; his first job was here in the late 1980s. And the spot he chose had the right combination of iron-rich gravels over clay, perfect for the classic, merlot-based "claret"-style of wine he wanted to produce.

"I was inspired by drinking the 1985 La Conseillante," says Gifford, eyes twinkling with the 20-year-old tasting memory of this great chateau from Pomerol, in Bordeaux. "It was the most complex yet complete red wine I'd ever drunk."

At the same time, he says, merlot in new world countries such as Australia and the US — and, increasingly, back in Bordeaux — had become a caricature: reds that were fat and overripe, nothing like the elegant merlot-based wines from Pomerol that Gifford had fallen in love with. "Great merlot," he says, "isn't soft and jammy. It should taste like

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MARK GIFFORD  
BLUE POLES VINEYARD

fresh plum: it should have a tang to it, a juiciness."

"Tangy" is exactly the word I've used to describe the freshness and brightness of the 2010 Blue Poles Allouran, a fragrant, perfectly balanced blend of two-thirds merlot and one-third cabernet franc. Many Margaret River reds taste over-oaked and overwrought; the Allouran is poised and elegant.

Gifford is quietly pleased with the 2010, the first wine he feels has some of the "completeness" that inspired him to plant grapes. Luckily, his pricing hasn't caught up with his confidence: it's available direct from the vineyard and some independents for \$28 a bottle, crazy for a wine of this quality.

Blue Poles is one of few Australian producers of the Italian red grape teroldego, the 2011 vintage of which (again, a mere \$30) is a cracker: gorgeous, plush black fruit, firm, sooty tannins — utterly unlike the vineyard's other reds.

Gifford's opinionated monthly reports on the vineyard's website are required reading for anyone interested in wine industry controversies. There's a long tradition of contrarian Australian vignerons using newsletters to weigh in on topical matters.

Like his predecessors, Gifford's reports can get him into trouble. "If you say something outside of what the industry wants to hear, you're branded a rebel," he says. "And if you say something they do want to hear, you're accused of toadying. But you've got to stir the possum, don't you?"

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## RECIPE

## Add a touch of je ne sais quoi

RACHEL BAXENDALE

A LIST of pet shops came up when I googled "where to buy rabbit Melbourne".

It wasn't quite what this country girl or the very French, delightfully carnivorous Stephane Reynaud had in mind.

The chef's latest, *Pies and Tarts*, starts with three pastry recipes (savoury and sweet shortcrust, and puff) and embarks on a patissier's tour of the French regions in six sections: vegetables and mushrooms, poultry and rabbit, meat, fish and seafood, cheese, and sweet.

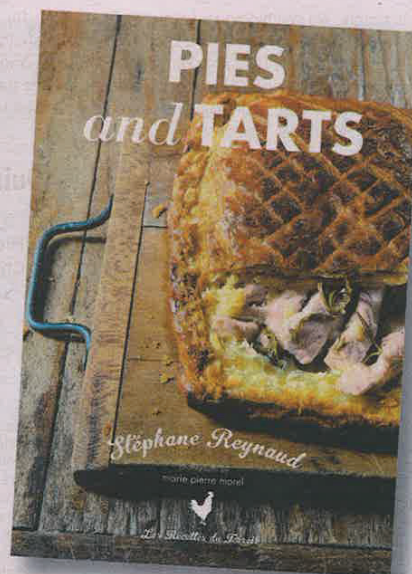
Reynaud is of the "why use one or two varieties of meat when you can combine duck breast, pork fillet, foie gras, lardo di Colonnata and pork jowl in one pie?" school of French cooking. Top-shelf liquor is also integral.

The step-by-step instructions and photographs are easy to follow, even if patience is required.

My previous experience didn't extend beyond the odd shortcrust tart, and I managed the puff pastry Rabbit and Leek Pie and a pickled Morello variation on the Cherry Pies with relative success.

All the recipes can be made with bought product, but why deprive oneself of the juvenile pleasure of shaping a decorative rabbit (or duck, or fish) from the offcuts?

As Reynaud says in his introduction: "Roll, chop, fill, glaze, decorate, bake and enjoy. Yippee!"



## PATES DE VOLAILLE OU DE LAPIN (Rabbit pie with basil)

## Ingredients

500g pate feuilletée (or 2 packets puff pastry)  
1 rabbit, boned by the butcher  
300ml of sauvignon blanc-style wine  
1 bunch basil  
3 French shallots  
150g speck (smoked belly pork)  
2 celery stalks with leaves  
1 tablespoon fennel seeds  
2 tablespoons brown sugar  
2 tablespoons pastis (anise-flavoured liqueur)  
1 egg  
Salt and pepper  
Serves 6  
Preparation time 20 minutes  
Cooking time 45 minutes  
Marinating time 24 hours  
Serve hot, as a main course

## Marinating the rabbit

Cut the rabbit into 1cm cubes. Finely chop the celery stalk with their leaves. Peel and chop the shallots. Cut the speck into thin matchsticks. Combine the rabbit with the white wine, pastis, speck,

shallots, celery and sugar. Season, cover with plastic wrap and set aside in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

Drain the mixture, strip the leaves from the basil and chop them, then combine with the rabbit.

## Assembly and cooking

Divide the dough in half and roll out 2 rounds of the same size. Line a baking tray with baking paper and lay one round of dough on top. Spread the rabbit mixture over the pastry, leaving a 1cm rim. Glaze the edges with beaten egg. Cover with the second piece of pastry. Seal the two rounds of pastry dough together by pinching the edges. Glaze the top of the pie and scatter with fennel seeds. Bake at 180°C for 1 hour.

Recipes and images from *Pies and Tarts* by Stephane Reynaud, Murdoch Books, rrp \$49.99, photographed by Marie Pierre Morel

## Tamsin Carvan

TAMSIN'S TABLE,  
GIPPSLAND, VICTORIA



SHORT  
ORDER

**BEST RECENT DINING EXPERIENCE:** A few weeks ago we banded together with our neighbours and had a lunch of home-made sausages in bread, cooked over a wood fire with warm sun on our backs... that was pretty fantastic.

**MUST-BUY INGREDIENT:** I would be lost without olive oil.

**MOST EMBARRASSING PANTRY ITEM:** I'm not sure I think about anything in that way.

**CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT:** Coffee beans. We buy them green in 2.5kg bags and roast them ourselves.

**WHAT I'M COOKING AT HOME:** Home-made bacon, slow-cooked roosters, freshly dug swedes and green tomatoes.

**NEXT BIG THING:** I like the idea of backyard-

grown garlic taking the world by storm.

**I HATE:** "Food" that presents itself as something it clearly isn't.

**FAVOURITE CUISINE:** Southern Italian, because the ingredients are similar to what we have available here but it is also the spirit of generosity that has truthfulness in it for me.

**WORST MEAL I EVER ATE:** Back when I was about 16 I heard of this amazing thing called risotto, so I made one, with normal white rice, and no idea what I was doing. We had fun standing our spoons up in the glug.

**BIGGEST CULINARY INFLUENCE:** All those amazing women — and there are still many around here — who had no choice but to raise their families on a backyard veggie patch and meat from the farm. They

had/have a deep understanding of thriftiness and frugality and nourishment — that's what makes them such creative, inspiring and generous cooks.

**FAVOURITE COOKBOOK:** The classic *Home from a Weed* by Patience Gray.

**MY LAST SUPPER:** A big bowl of soup made of things straight from the garden, cooked in water (not stock), with roughly pounded almonds and basil stirred through at the end along with pecorino and a good squeeze of lemon. Bliss.

Tamsin is hosting a sold-out dinner at her farmhouse, Hill Farm Thanksgiving, on June 28 as part of The Roast Collection from the creators of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival. [tamsinstable.com.au](http://tamsinstable.com.au); [melbournefoodandwine.com.au](http://melbournefoodandwine.com.au)